

## The Secrets to Peace and Joy: Change Myself by Love

Huizhen Guo (Jean) (Mentor: Daniel Otero)  
Department of Mathematics and Computer Science

I am a happy person. You may ask why I am happy.

Am I healthy? I am not very sick but I am not strong either. I always feel cold and wear much more than other people do. I need more sleep than other adults do. That is the reason I exercise on a regular basis.

Am I rich? I am certainly not poor; I have food to eat, clothes to wear, and a bed to sleep in. I am satisfied with my living conditions, but I am definitely not rich.

Do I have a happy family? My daughter and I often sing the song "I love you; you love me; we are happy family," and we do love each other and get along well, but my husband has not been living with us for many years, he is not eligible to work in the United States.

How about my work? I do enjoy teaching and my students, but my students do not seem to enjoy their classes that much and I have been working hard on that.

The reason I have joy and peace in mind is that I have faith in God's will, not my own will. God will lead my life. I love God and people as Jesus did. Because of my love, I am willing to change myself: changing my thoughts, perspectives, the way I look at the world, the way I look at other people. Just as the Bible says that all things work together to benefit those who love God, I would like to share what I have experienced spiritually with anybody who reads my article.

### **Parenting**

Since I mentioned "change", you can guess I was not happy before I was willing to change. You are right. I was unhappy, actually anxious, for years. I was worried about too many things and did not realize the danger of my unhealthy mood. When my daughter reached the age of 15, the confusing and suffering age, the conflict between us triggered hidden problems in both of us. The resulting conflict made me even sadder. I was concerned and pondered, "If I can't get along with my daughter, how can I get along with other people? Who else can I get along with?" I have been walking in dark and struggling, seeking light since then, to find the path to happiness and peace. Human wisdom is limited. My friends' help didn't solve the problem. I turned to God, trying to find answers. I started reading the Bible, attending Bible study and Sunday worship more often. Then the turning point came. That was love, which God put in all creatures' hearts. After a particularly miserable night, the words came to me that "I love you, you should love others." When my heart is filled with

love, I see hope and feel joy and strength while when I distrust others, the doubts hurt me first before they hurt others. Once I chose love, the remedy to any wounds, it began to work: changing me and letting me see the other side of me. As the phrase states, I too "focused on the stick in others' eyes, and didn't see the big log in my own eyes." Unconsciously, I set up two standards, the higher one for others and the lower one for myself. I put myself at the center, and expected others to run around me.

When I look at my daughter in a different way, the view is changed. I was upset because she paid too much attention to how she looked. But, do I want her to look unattractive? Certainly not. When I was in high school and college, though I was a top student in all subjects, I was not very confident because I didn't think I was pretty. In fact, I like to see people dressed beautifully, because they decorate the city just like trees, grass, and flowers do. I guess I didn't like the way my daughter dressed. But should a teenage girl have the same perspective on dressing as me? Actually, I have come to ask her opinion when I purchase dresses for myself, because she has a good fashion sense.

I was upset because my daughter didn't do well in math and science classes. The truth was, she thought she was not good at those subjects and gave up before trying. Now I ask myself: am I really good at everything when I was in high school? My handwriting was terrible, and I was often tardy for the first bell, in college too. Because I made good grades, my parents and teachers never criticized me. They spoiled me. Why don't I look at the subjects my daughter is good at, such as English, history, and journalism? She also excels at drawing and cooking. She is making progress everyday and even getting A's in math and chemistry now.

My daughter is in a vital stage of her life. She needs love, care, comfort, encouragement, and guidance. I should be the provider of her needs. God created her and has a plan for her. I don't need to worry about her future. I will love her no matter how much she achieves or accomplishes. I will help and support her as long as I can.

She is changing too, while I am changing. Now I am "the most caring mom in the world" and she is "the most lovely daughter." Sometimes I am wondering if what I said or did is correct or not, since it will influence her. So, I pray to God to give me wisdom to teach my daughter.

I thank God for putting love in our hearts. This love has saved us. The biggest lesson I have learned is that people are different. Every living life is created by God uniquely. We need to accept and respect the differences. People have different talents. Everyone is born to be useful.

## Teaching

Better understanding my daughter helps me understand my students better. The experience of working out the relationship with my daughter helps me a lot when I am trying to work out the relationship with my students. I know all problems can be solved if I can love my students as I love my daughter.

Some students complained that my class was rigorous. My reaction was that math class is not like going to see a movie; it is supposed to be rigorous. College is the place where professors and students should work hard, not the place where they always have fun. Now I am thinking I should try to make the teaching process interesting by changing my teaching style. Maybe studying can be fun if we make it more interesting. That is part of my teaching responsibility.

Some students also complained about my English. I was very upset and thought: if other people could understand me, why didn't the students. It was just an excuse. Now I understand it from their point of view. An accent is a barrier when the material itself is hard to understand. I need to practice to continually improve my spoken English.

I was disappointed when some students could not solve linear equations or couldn't calculate the area of a triangle. I used to think that they had poor mathematics skills, and wondered what they did in high school and how they could learn college math if they were unprepared. Now I think this way: they are not math majors; it is understandable that they forget mathematics. While I took chemistry and physics in high school, I don't remember anything about those subjects now because I never use them. My students are here sitting in the class because they don't know, and I am here teaching because I do know. I used to complain that the students were lazy; they didn't want to attend classes and didn't want to do their work. Now I often remind myself that there were times in high school I skipped study hall and watched a movie. There were times in college I missed classes and went shopping. The students are young adults; they still need time to mature. Even adults make mistakes and delay work sometimes.

I began to spend more time preparing for classes. I give group quizzes, individual quizzes, group exercises and individual exercises, and hands-on activities in class to make it more interesting. For example, when I was driving to school one day an idea came to my mind. Random variable is a basic concept in statistics. I can let the students use either the miles away or times spent to measure "distance from home to school," and

collect data on the two variables respectively. This helped them to understand the concept easily.

I used to get mad when I read students' evaluations. The good comments didn't make me happy while the negative comments hurt me at first then the hurt turned to anger. I still don't feel comfortable reading negative evaluations, but now I have learned I can, indeed, find something I can do to improve my teaching skills and to teach more effectively.

Statistics is used in research in a growing number of disciplines. When people say they don't like something, it may very well be because they don't like it. But, it may be sometimes they think they are not good at it. I hope, by teaching statistics, that I can help those who are not good at math/statistics realize that math/statistics is useful and not as hard as they thought. They can learn the material. I hope what they learn in school will benefit them in their work later.

I attended the Lilly Conference, a conference on college teaching, and the workshop prior to the conference in November 2005. The speaker at the workshop was Louis Schmier, author of "Random Thoughts". One thing he said impresses me, even now: you teach who you are. Students can tell if I am happy or sad, nervous or relaxed, prepared or unprepared. They can tell everything in my mind by my tone, the expression on my face, my attitude, my posture, etc. When I walk into the classroom with love, care in mind, they can feel that and can be affected by that.

I have been thinking about why I love my career. One reason is that teaching provides me with an opportunity to speak, to spread my thoughts and influence others. Yet, it is a big responsibility. I need to think carefully about what I say and what I do in classes.

I was nominated as a "professor of the year" recently. I know there is much to learn to become an effective teacher. I am confident and look forward to the challenge. God will help me and give me wisdom and strength to reach the goal.

### **Current Challenges**

The biggest challenge I face now is that I am trying to accept the fact that, while my husband lives with us, he doesn't work. Even if he gets a work permit later, he might not work. However, he may change his attitude once he settles down and absorbs the US culture. In China, many people don't admire those who do certain types of jobs, such as farmers, and bus drivers. Instead, they admire those who make money or have power.

God has a plan for me and will guide me. I must listen and yield to God's will. God has prepared the best for me, just as parents always give the best to their children.

### **In Summary**

When anger, hatred, and bitterness were controlling me, my brain was like a pot of glue and didn't function. That made me frightened. What was I going to do if I could not work? When joy and peace are comforting me, I can think clearly and my brain works well. I need to work. I need to support my daughter and myself, but I also enjoy working. Bad moods consume a lot of energy. Such a waste they are. I wished I could use all my energy in work. Now, I can, because I have learned to love and forgive others, to thank God for everything.

Everyone has three worlds, a spiritual one, an emotional one and a physical one. When my spiritual world is in right order, I am emotionally stable and physically energetic. Spiritual growth is a gradual process; it doesn't happen in one night.

I am still up and down sometimes. Every time when I am falling down I pray to God, and He lifts me up. I need to build up my spiritual world stronger and stronger by feeding myself with spiritual food just as I need to feed my physical body with earth-growing food. Some day, it will be strong enough and not be knocked down easily.

I grew up in a non-religious family. I was told there were no saviors in the world. Only people can save themselves. I would never have become a Christian if I had not come to the United States. There is an old Chinese saying, "It is easy for mountains to change to rivers and for rivers to change to mountains, but it is difficult for people to change." Look at me, I have changed; I am a new person, a happy person. The more I change, the happier I am. Nothing is impossible in God. I hope you can find joy and peace in God, too.